

Valley Courier *e-Edition*

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5:00 pm
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Colorado DOLA director visits Valley

Posted: Saturday, Sep 15th, 2007

BY: Ruth Heide

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Officials share needs

By RUTH HEIDE

ALAMOSA — As long as the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) has money, the Alamosa area has uses for it.

Concluding a tour through all six San Luis Valley counties on Friday, DOLA Executive Director Susan Kirkpatrick met with City of Alamosa councilors and staff as well as representatives from the SLV Regional Medical Center and Valley-Wide Health Systems all of whom have been recipients of DOLA grants in the past.

Kirkpatrick said that although the DOLA grant program has been under scrutiny recently, she believed it would likely continue in some form in the future, perhaps as a small grants program for applications in the \$100,000-200,000 range. Kirkpatrick said she hoped that type of grants program would have a faster turn around for applicants. It might take a couple of years to get that program worked out, however, she said.

"I really do think we will keep a grants program," she said. She said a month ago she was not sure that would be the case.

"It is really important for the whole state especially the rural parts of the state for some kind of grants program like DOLA has," she said. "It is clear to me that the needs far outstrip the revenues coming in."

She added the funding was still not totally secure. "It is not over. Things are looking better."

Kirkpatrick said the current grant procedures would probably remain in place for the next year.

Local officials meeting with Kirkpatrick on Friday thanked her for DOLA's support of Valley projects in the past and shared some of their needs for the future. Most of the needs centered on capital improvements within the city and local medical facilities.

Alamosa City Manager Nathan Cherpeski said infrastructure would always be a concern for Alamosa. For example, the city hall building is not Americans with Disabilities Act accessible, the fire station at city hall is not big enough for new fire trucks and the public works building needs replaced. "Those are big ticket items," Cherpeski said.

SLV Regional Medical Center Chief Information Officer Spencer Hamons said the hospital would always have infrastructure needs as well. A portion of the hospital's buildings that were built in the 1940's need updated, for example, Hamons said.

Kirkpatrick said the Valley is unique in its cooperation and partnerships for grant applications because that kind of cooperation does not occur everywhere.



Photo by Ruth Heide Alamosa City Manager Nathan Cherpeski, right, shares some of the reasons for replacing the public works department building during a tour of the public works building on Friday. From left are Councilor Charles Griego, behind him Councilor Ron Green and Colorado Department of Local Affairs Executive Director Susan Kirkpatrick.

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Hamons said the Valley is fortunate to have great leadership not only in local governments but also in areas such as the hospital and Valley-Wide where people want

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